export interests, addressing non-tariff barriers that impede our market access, and fully realizing the development dimension in the negotiations.

(d) to (e) Negotiating objectives in agriculture, and strategies to achieve them, have been developed based on analytical work by research institutions such as the National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER), Indian Institute of Foreign Trade (IIFT) and the Centre for WTO Studies. An Expert Group on Agriculture consisting of eminent agro-economists has been meeting from time to time to provide guidance in the agriculture negotiations. Consultations are also held with Governments of States and Union Territories at officials and/or Ministerial levels. These processes are intensified depending on the exigencies of WTO negotiations. The Government also works closely with other like-minded countries to build issue based coalitions, such as the G-20 on Agriculture and the G-33 on Special Products and Special Safeguard Mechanism.

Strategy for WTO meeting at Hong Kong

975. SHRI VIJAY J. DARDA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has finalized its strategy for the WTO Ministerial level talks scheduled to take place in Hong Kong, especially with regard to our approach to tariff reduction, reduction in subsidies in developing countries, trade distorting domestic support by developed countries in the agricultural sector, TRIPS on account of public health, etc.;

(b) if so, whether a consensus is also being tried to be evolved in such vital matters with leading political parties; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI E.V.K.S. ELANGOVAN): (a) to (c) The Government has a two-pronged strategy to ensure that its core concerns and interest continue to be adequately addressed in the ongoing WTO negotiations under the Doha Work Programme as they proceed from one stage to another. On the domestic front, the Government maintains an active dialogue with different sections of stakeholders, including the political parties, to develop India's position on issues under discussion at the WTO, including

those relating to agriculture and TRIPS and Public Health. The consultative processes get further intensified in the run-up to the WTO Ministerial Conference in December 2005. At the WTO, the Government has been working closely with other like-minded countries, who share similar concerns and interests, to forge issue based coalitions, such as the G-20 on Agriculture and the G-33 on Special Products and Special Safeguard Mechanism. These alliances have also been closely coordinating positions with other developing country groupings.

Indo-Japan bilateral trade

976. SHRI B.J. PANDA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that as a result of the recent visit of the Prime Minister of Japan to India, the prospects of Indo-Japan bilateral trade have improved;

(b) what is the extent of Japanese companies operating in India in 2005 and what its growth since 2001; and

(c) what is the action plan of both the countries to further strengthen their economic relations to contribute more to the development and prosperity of India?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI E.V.K.S. ELANGOVAN): (a) Yes, Sir. As a result of the visit of Prime Minister of Japan to India, the prospects of Indo-Japan bilateral trade are expected to improve.

(b) The number of Japanese companies operating in India is steadily increasing. Presently, more than 260 Japanese companies have invested in India.

(c) Steps being taken, on an on-going basis, to strengthen economic relations, include participation in trade fairs/exhibitions, exchange of delegations at both governmental and business levels, exchange of information, posing ODA loan package proposals to the Government of Japan, setting up of the India-Japan Joint Study Group, and the Japan-India Policy Dialogue, etc.